

# FEAST AND FAMINE

## MINERVA CUEVAS



### Gallery weekend hours

Friday 18/09, 2015, 6 pm to 10 pm

Saturday 19/09, 2015 11 am to 7 pm

Sunday 20/09, 2015 11 am to 6 pm

September 22nd - October 24th,  
2015

Tuesday through Thursday,  
from 11 am to 6 pm  
Friday and Saturday,  
from 11 am to 4 pm

*Cannibalism is the only thing that unites us. Socially. Economically. Philosophically.*  
Oswald de Andrade. Cannibalism Manifesto.

In a time of generalized indifference and skepticism, Minerva Cuevas' (Mexico, 1975) projects are characterized by a critical investigation of social realities. Her work seeks to provoke reflection on established systems, employing irony and humor to analyze the power structures that underlie social and economic ties. In this exhibition, Cuevas uses cacao as a material to reveal the colonial processes inherent in global trade and commerce. Chocolate is used to transform and distort images of quotidian consumption in order to question the notions of value, exchange, and property that rule the capitalist economy.

The *Feast and Famine* exhibit had its beginnings in the study of the coin collection at the Museum of Ethnography in Frankfurt. From early inquiries into the use of cacao as currency in the pre-hispanic era, Cuevas began to investigate the cultivation of cacao in present-day Mexico, as well as the surrounding conflicts and commercial interests. The majority of the cacao produced in Mexico comes from the south, an area also notable for its oil production. As economic pressures continue to shape the human landscape of the region, agricultural workers are increasingly forced to abandon their fields and work in the hydrocarbon industry.

## kurimanzutto

At the same time, Cuevas analyzes the term *cannibal*, and how it has been used throughout history. During the colonial era, the European perception of this phenomenon allowed the demonization of the revolting Indians and initiated the process of “civilizing” the inhabitants of the new world. Today, social cannibalism is reflected in the exploitative labor practices associated with contemporary consumption. The manner in which particular ethnographic objects and histories are acquired, appropriated, and “owned” by institutions and governments can be seen as a way of controlling and consuming the other, a cultural cannibalism being played out on the symbolic level.

Among the pieces produced for this exhibition are 500 chocolate ears, made especially from a crop of native cacao, Grano Real Xoconusco. Cultivated in the state of Chiapas, the majority of this cacao as well as the cacao produced in other parts of the country is exported for consumption across Europe. This piece functions as the nexus of various investigations that Cuevas has carried out in recent years. The ears reference the pre-hispanic practice of using the body as a unit of measurement, as well as early anthropological efforts to compare races and cultures by measuring and documenting the human body. The symbolism of the severed ear also recalls the methods of social repression, torture and control that have historically been used around the world.

Conceived as a playful essay, *Feast and Famine* is an interdisciplinary project combining different aspects of anthropology, product design and economics. The pieces in the show serve as tools to discuss the condition of the individual under the capitalist regime: the constant abuse, dispossession and estrangement from ancestral and cultural identity, as well as the latent possibility of revolt.

Minerva Cuevas studied at the Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas at UNAM. She has had solo exhibitions at the Museo de la Ciudad de México, México (2012); Cornerhouse Gallery, United Kingdom (2011); Whitechapel Gallery, United Kingdom (2010); Van Abbemuseum, Netherlands (2008); Kunsthalle Basel, Switzerland (2007); MC Kunst, United States (2007); Le Grand Café-Centre d’art contemporain, France (2007); DAAD galerie, Germany (2004) y el Museo Tamayo, México (2000).

Her work has been included in collective exhibitions at: The Museum of Contemporary Art of Detroit, United States (2015); Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, United States (2014); Kunsthau Bregenz, Austria (2013); Fundación Jumex Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico (2013); Musée d’art moderne de la Ville de Paris (MAM/ARC), France (2012); Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporáneo MUAC, Mexico (2011); KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Germany (2010); Centre Pompidou, France (2010); among others. She has participated in various biennales, including: The Liverpool Biennial, United Kingdom (2010); The 6th Berlin Biennial of Contemporary Art, Germany (2010); The 9th Biennial of Lyon, France (2007); the Bienal de Mercosur, Brasil (2007); the 27th Bienal de São Paulo, Brazil (2006); the Tirana Biennale, Albania (2005); and the 8th International Biennial of Istanbul, Turkey (2003).

Minerva Cuevas lives and works in Mexico City.

kurimanzutto and Minerva would like to thank the support and collaboration of Sr. Cruz Rodríguez Melendez, Héctor Galván and Alejandra Mosig.